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QUARTERLY



CREATION SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES SOCIETY

The Creation Social Science and Humanities Society (CSSHS) was incorporated in Wichita, Kansas, in 1977. The CSSHS is educational, and will promote and disseminate information on the implications of the Biblical creation model of origins for the social sciences and humanities, with emphasis on the development of these disciplines in accordance with the rapidly emerging and increasingly well established natural scientific models of Biblical creation.

The **Quarterly Journal** is directed toward teachers and students of the social sciences and humanities, especially in institutions of higher learning. The CSSHS may also publish books, monographs, and other writings, and sponsor speakers, seminars, and research projects related to its educational purpose.

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b. persons 18 years old or over, who have held office in another creation-science organization with beliefs, substantially identical with those contained in the CSSHS **Statement of Belief**, for at least one year immediately prior to applying for membership in the CSSHS; or who have a commitment to our belief and work clearly evidenced by their record of actual involvement. Voting membership dues are \$15 (foreign, \$20 U.S.) per year.

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DEVOTIONAL

"THE DAY OF THE LORD"

Carla Vale

*"How long, O Lord, holy and true, until you judge and
avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"*

— The cry of the martyrs in Revelation 6:9

How long, O Lord, wilt Thou not slay
The spoilers of Thy peace?
How long shall wicked men prevail
And sin and lies increase?
How soon wilt Thou avenge the blood
Of saints and martyrs slain?
Up, Lord of hosts,
Destroy their boasts
That faith and pray'r are vain!

Be still, my child, abide in me,
You are my heart's delight.
Fear not the wily enemy,
His raging and his spite!
Await in Me triumphantly
The Day I am reveal'd:
Myself the Word,
Your life and sword,
Your armor and your shield!

I thank Thee, Lord, for granting me
Thy presence and Thy rest.
Thou wilt preserve me faithfully
And make my trials blest!
Thou also wilt bestow that Day
A crown of righteousness
To me and all
Who heed Thy call
In love and faithfulness! Amen.

LETTER

Dear Editor:

The *CSSH Quarterly* continues to make a significant contribution, providing an important added dimension to the Origins subject. We especially enjoyed reading about Becky in the Summer Issue (Vol. XIII No. 4, Summer 1991) and took inspiration from it.

Paul Ellwanger
3830 Old Denton Road #213
Carrollton, TX 75007

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CREATION-SCIENCE SUMMER CONFERENCES SCHEDULED

Two excellent creation-science conferences are set for this summer:

The 1992 Twin-Cities Creation Conference, July 29 to August 1, 1992, Northwestern College, Roseville, Minnesota. The conference will feature nationally known creation-science speakers, and is designed for the scientist, pastor, teacher, and informed Christian. For registration information write: 1459 Lone Oak Road, Eagan Mn. 55121, or call 612-454-1988.

International Conference on Science and Belief, August 11-15, 1992; Pascal Centre, Redeemer College, Ancaster, ON Canada L9G 3N6. This five-day conference is planned for scholars with a professional interest in the relationship between science and belief. The first half of the conference will focus on general metaphysical beliefs while the second half will emphasize Christian beliefs.

CREATION EVANGELISM

Let me tell you about Awalo (in Africa). Only one year ago, Awalo was a fetish worshiper. His own words tell his story best:

When I was worshiping the fetishes and honoring the talismans, I had no peace in my heart, and my anxiety sometimes made me physically ill.

Then I learned to read, and I read the story in God's Word about the creation of the whole world, how God made everything. I knew then that we should not worship the creation, but we should worship God Himself Who is the Creator.

— *The Bible League Newsletter*, Sept. 26, 1991

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COMMUNISM, HISTORY, ART, AND MYSTICISM: A Reply to Leon Trotsky from the Biblical Creation Perspective

Ellen Myers

Dear Lev Davidovich:

I have just finished reading your *Literature and Revolution*¹ written three years before Stalin got his first wish—your expulsion from the Communist Party in 1927, subsequent exile to Southern Siberia, and reduction to an Orwellian (1984) non-person. And as you sensed from within your perspective of dialectic materialism, Stalin was right when opting for the Party against the individual. After all, if dialectic materialism and scientific socialism are correct about the monistic nature of the universe—if the supernatural Creator God of the Bible does not exist—then you like all men are nothing but a combination of chemicals. Now, after your death, you are in the process of disintegration or recombination; that is, "you" no longer exist. The chemical combination calling itself Stalin got its second wish when it had you liquidated by means of the chemical combination known as Luis Mercader which sank an ice-axe into your brilliant brain on August 20, 1940. This was a victory for the Party, History's vanguard.

Complicated language, Lev Davidovich, but it is the only one which should properly be used by dialectic materialists when referring to men and women. Christian believers like myself are free to use simpler terms. To us men and women are just this, men and women, made in the image of the God of the Bible, each with a personal "I," like our God Whose name is "I am that which I am" (Exodus 3:14). We know ourselves to be more than matter in motion, with more than transitory meaning. To us history lies in this God's hands and has no power or goals taken by itself. In your communist world view, on the contrary, there is a dualism between your self-directed History and the vanguard of the proletariat, the Party, without which History would be powerless to fulfill itself or to realize its supposedly self-inherent goals. Would you tell me, please, how a mindless, random natural process can have goals? But if the process is *not* random as you assert for "History," then there must be something like a mind controlling and directing it. And then how can you say that "all through history, mind limps after reality"? (p. 19). Could it be that the entire awesome Marxist-Hegelian historical synthesis is merely another form of that wishful and fuzzy mysticism you condemn in others? Could this synthesis be equally well expressed in the terms of Henri Bergson's *elan vital* or in Father

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Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's "Omega Point"? And if the impersonal process of History needs the Party to realize its "goals," then your actual god is the Leader of the Party. Bow to Stalin, then, and die!

You spew out your most scalding ire at Christian believers; no rather, forgive me, at your straw man of Christianity, totally unlike real Christianity. You hate "fatalistic Christianity," a product of your hostile imagination, which you claim to find in a long-forgotten novel by Marietta Shaginyan. She is, you say, "anti-revolutionary in her very essence," because "it is her ... household indifference to everything that is not of the household that reconciles her to the Revolution" (p. 115). Can you really have believed that you had dealt Christianity a blow? Ours is the unique religion whose founder is the Second Person of the Godhead, Who was neither indifferent, nor resigned, nor callously untouched by our infirmities. He countersigned His "promissory note" (p. 241) in His own blood on the cross, stripping Himself of divine power and bliss to be "in all things made like unto His brethren" (Hebrews 2:17). "Household indifference"? Our household, Lev Davidovich, is the entire universe, created and owned by our Father, God the Creator (Psalm 8, Psalm 24, 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, and many more Bible passages)! How can we be indifferent to anything, knowing that all creation is awaiting our perfection as the children, the partakers of the nature, of our God (Romans 8:18ff, 2 Peter 1:1-4)! If Shaginyan be guilty of your charge against her, we yet go free.

You also pour contempt upon the "falseness even in Dostoevsky's plous and submissive figures" whom Dostoevsky supposedly "created ... in large degree as an antithesis to himself ... in his perfidious Christianity" (p. 114). You prefer the totally unbiblical "feminine wide-hipped God" you think you see in the work of the poet Shkapskaya. I can agree with you, by the way, about the relatively greater appeal of this kind of God, "something in the nature of a go-between and a midwife" but still personal, to "the incubated chick of mystic philosophy beyond the stars" (p. 41). However, your own goddess "History," Lev Davidovich, can plausibly be called the incubated chick of dialectic materialism on planet Earth!

You are a spellbinder with words. Like Nietzsche, you sway your readers by the economy, fierceness and vitality of your style. Who could surpass what you state of the principal "pre-October" symbolist-mystical writers Sologub, Rozanov or Zinaida Hippus, whose books "are completely and entirely superfluous to a modern post-October man, like a glass bead to a soldier on the battlefield. ... letters about the erotic cult of the bull Apis, an article about St. Sophia, the Earthly and the Heavenly ... what hopelessness, what desolation!" (p. 29).

I reject these peddlers of pantheist-mystic glass beads in the name of the Creator of reality, the God of the Bible. You condemn them in the name of "the Revolution ... (which) is striving in endless gropings and experiments to find the best ways of building a house that is solid" (p. 177). But what will that house look like concretely? Will it be altogether new, or merely a somewhat overhauled, same

old decrepit structure, say, Tsarism in Bolshevik form? Already in the last years of your life the latter answer was fairly obvious, unless the novelty of Bolshevism were its unprecedented scale of mass murder and torture. And can the Revolution's house insure its solidity by its terror, or is not its very terror the proof of its insecurity?

You sense all this in your half-sullen, half-exasperated hatred of the Russian peasants who, you think, should have supported the Revolution, but who instead "eat in order to work, work in order to eat, and besides that, to be born, to be born, and to die" (p. 109). You therefore distrust the peasant poets Kliuev and Yessenin, and you give vent to your baffled perplexity when you cry out:

For what is our Revolution, if it is not a mad rebellion in the name of the conscious, rational, purposeful and dynamic principle of life, against the elemental, senseless, biologic automatism of life, that is, against the peasant roots of our old Russian history, against its aimlessness, its non-teleological character ... ? If we take this away from the Revolution, then the Revolution is not worth the candles which were burned for it, and ... much more than candles were burned for it (p. 109).

But Lev Davidovich, don't you see that you indulge in vitalist-idealist mysticism with your "conscious, rational purposeful and dynamic principle of life?" In fact, your mysticism is worse than that of Bergson or Teilhard de Chardin: you ascribe consciousness and rationality to your "principle of life," which they never did, mindful of the undeniable fact that a "principle" cannot be conscious or rational.

Moreover, you then put dualism at the heart of "life" when you pit its alleged dynamic principle against its "elemental, senseless, biologic automatism." If there be such a dualism (there isn't really—it is a figment of the impersonalism of your evolutionist dialectic), then you oppose the very side which is elemental, of "the peasant roots," and thus in some sense "solid." And yet you said your Revolution wanted to build "a house that is solid"! Rejecting the solidity you might find in elemental, root materials, where will you discover it? Further, can branches rebelling against "roots" possibly succeed? It is the insoluble dilemma of godless mysticism which sees history as endless cycles of unremitting struggle between two opposing sides of "life," of the "force." Manichean darkness against its complementary light, black magic against white magic, Eros against Thanatos, etc. etc. We have a movement like this in the West today, calling itself the "New Age." Its intellectual vanguard would find no fault with your words about "life," nor would they quarrel with the "pre-October" symbolists who were clearly its kindred spirits. In your view of "History" and "life," Lev Davidovich, you show that you, too—you, the passionate Communist—belong in their ranks.

It is time now to turn to art, of which you say so much in your book. You begin by saying that "there is no revolutionary art as yet" (p. 229). Then you state that socialist art will show emotions of solidarity in a "realistic monism, in the sense of a philosophy of life"

In which "our life, cruel, violent and disturbed to its very bottom" says to the artist:

I must have an artist of a single love. Whatever way you take hold of me, whatever tools and instruments created by the development of art you choose, I leave to you, to your temperament and to your genius. But you must understand me as I am, you must take me as I will become, and there must be no one else besides me" (p. 236).

A tall order for the artist! No wonder "revolutionary art" could never give us more than the colossal, frozen, altogether lifeless statues or barracklike, shoddily built mass apartment buildings decreed by the Party. You give grudging praise to the great art of the Christian Middle Ages but deny that it might be due to the Christian faith, for such a view "ignores the materialistic and historical foundation from which the ancient drama and the Gothic art grew and from which a new art must grow" (p. 241). But why, then, may art not be based upon the "peasant roots of our old Russian history," as are the works of Kliuev, Yessenin and Boris Pilnyak, who was "swept away by the terror to an unknown fate"?² The trouble with your self-directed yet Party-enacted "History" and your dynamic yet non-theological "life" also cripples your philosophy of art.

Your last few pages are a study in utopian optimism feeding on itself and hence increasing in bombast while decreasing in realistic substance. You conclude with this paean to the socialist future:

Man will become immeasurably stronger, wiser and subtler; his body will become more harmonized, his movements more rhythmic, his voice more musical. The forms of life will become dynamically dramatic. The average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe, or a Marx. And above this ridge new peaks will rise (Trotsky, p. 255).

I think you wrote creatively here—well, imaginatively at least; and like yourself when condemning Kliuev, I warn you that this praise is irony. Actually, Lev Davidovich, your glowing "prophecy" is mere *propaganda*, and so is all your revolutionary and socialistic art. Your "futurist" exultation can come true only if the "facts" you predict have foundations in the present. You came up with precious few if any artists to praise even in 1924; what made you jump to your grandiose conclusions? You, with your sense of honesty in praising Christian medieval art; you, with your well-taken rejection of the fatuous mysticism of Russian symbolist "pre-October" literature—how could you stoop to this incantation on the future "superman" in Nietzsche's worst visionary and propagandistic manner?

We Christians, truly realistic to the core, have a motto of our own: "Test everything; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). One good feature of your book, Lev Davidovich, is your passion. It was Dante, a Christian and one of mankind's greatest artists, who said that the hottest fires of hell are reserved for those who in a time of moral crisis preserve their neutrality. In this he merely echoed our Lord Jesus Christ, Who said He would have us

hot or cold, but would vomit the lukewarm out of His mouth (Revelation 3:16). Another redeeming feature of your book is that we can thank you for leading us to writers who may well be artists in truth (your reluctant hostility towards them is in their favor): Kliuev, Yessenin, Pilnyak, Akhmatova. Third, you rightly exhort artists to be single-minded. However, because of your false dualism between dynamism and rest, you idolize dynamism and would press all artists into its service. This puts artists in a strait-jacket. Yet the answer is not "art for art's sake," which in practice amounts to sheer experimentation with form and method for the sake of novel effects, and is stifling and sterile. True art, as Dorothy L. Sayers, another Christian, tells us, is to express an experience

with an exceptional power ... so that not only (the poet), but we ourselves, recognize that experience as our own. ... A poet does not see something—say the full moon—and say: "This is a very beautiful sight—let me set about finding words for the appropriate expression of what people ought to feel about it."³

"What they ought to feel about it"—this is the Achilles heel of all propagandistic art. From the first Russian positivist literary critic, Vissarion Belinsky, to Leo Tolstoy's *What Is Art?* to yourself, Lev Davidovich, "social consciousness" critics have ordered artists to use words, colors or music "for the appropriate expression of what people ought to feel about" the artist's subject. The subject itself was also prescribed, namely, the "social need" of the moment.

True artists know better. They are concerned with actual, true reality just as much as is the mathematician plotting a trajectory to the moon, or the medical researcher seeking a vaccine for cancer. Truth and propaganda mix neither in science nor in art. Both science and art must reflect the immutable personal character of God the Creator of all things. It is no accident that "socialist realism" gave us pseudo-biologist Trofim Lysenko along with Stalinist architecture, while both Boris Pasternak and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Russia's greatest writers of this century, worship the Christian God of the Russian peasants. It is no accident that the Soviet economy also collapsed in the late 1980s, as did the Soviet Communist Party in the Year of our Lord 1991. Propaganda feeds neither soul, nor mind, nor body. Man must live by every word of God, as Jesus Christ told Satan (Matthew 4:4). True art, true science, true economic prosperity, all things are added to us only as we first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

The "pre-October" symbolist art was also propaganda, for it aimed at altering the consciousness of its recipients by opening their minds to the mystical, the occult. Your words differ superficially from theirs, and you and your fellow materialist monists may sincerely believe yourselves separate from them. Since you are all monists, however, you only differ in terminology and, for the time being, in methods: their magic is "white," yours is "black." The only real enemy of you both is biblical Christianity and its transcendent, omnipotent, sovereign God and Creator.

References

- ¹ Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, Fifth Printing 1975).
- ² James A. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe* (New York: Random House Vintage Books) 1970, p. 535.
- ³ Dorothy L. Sayers, *Christian Letters to a Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans), 1969, p. 79.

THE CREATIVE URGE: A BIBLICAL CREATION BASIS FOR ART

Celia Jolley

We who accept the authority of Scripture recognize God as Creator. John 1:3 says, "All things came into being through Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."¹ Worship at its height in the beauty of holiness cries out:

Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created." (Rev. 4:11)

What then do we the created do with the creative urge?

As a Christian artist I keep before me a flame of inspiration from Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.

The rebirthed artist is "he who sees." The creative urge lifts above the mundane view to a realization that all of life is sacred when there is an eye for seeing.

The creative urge is a gift from the Creator, an endowment. Art, one manifestation of the creative urge, is an attempt to capture and appreciate the beauty as well as the groaning of Creation. Creativity is part of what was breathed into Man from the Beginning. Francis Schaeffer states "because man is made in the image of God ... man not only can love and think, and feel emotion, but also has the capacity to create ... Creativity is intrinsic to our manliness."² It sets us apart from the rest of the created. Imagine Adam and Eve before the fall with undiminished capacity for creativity with the inspiration fresh, still wet, from the hand of God surrounding them.

From that long ago garden to the present the creative urge drives us on. Even my nine year old often wonders aloud, "I have to make something! What shall I make?" She must find vent or become totally frustrated. This is mirrored in every artist's soul.

Proverbs 8, a Creation passage, richly colors the imaginings. To look at the ramifications of some of these verses is to give a Biblical foundation upon which to build with creative abandon. The "sound wisdom" of verse 14 means the capacity to accomplish something good. Verse 21 reminds us it is God who endows those who love Him "That I may fill their treasures." Beginning with verse 22, we get a glimpse of the scene of Creation from the first-hand witness of the

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Son of God. He concludes in verses 30-31: "Then I was beside Him, as a master workman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, Rejoicing in the world, His earth, And having my delight in the sons of men." God as Creator gives wisdom to accomplish something good and endows those who love Him. In the great creative process, there was rejoicing in the world, His earth, and delight. I don't believe God has quit delighting in the sons of men who love Him. I believe God shares the delight of creation in the creative urge. After all, the author of Proverbs understood this joint delight in creative endeavor as he, Solomon, built the temple for God's glory.

Exodus 28:2-3 spells out the call for artists:

And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. And you shall speak to all the skillful (wise of heart)* persons whom I have endowed with the spirit of wisdom (artistic skill)," that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister as priest to Me. (*marginal notes of explanation in the NASB.)

This really elevates a Christian view of art to call skillful persons "wise of heart"; artistic skill "the spirit of wisdom." Here again, we see it is in an endowment of God. Could it be a sin of omission to not use it, a talent buried? Finally, we see in this passage that art has a two-fold purpose: for glory and for beauty.

For the artist, the creative urge runs deep and strong. C. S. Lewis affirms, "When Christian work is done on a serious subject, there is no gravity and no sublimity it cannot attain."³ In following the urge, however, there is struggle and temptation: to create in our own image, not His; for our own glory, not His.

When God was done creating, He said, "It is good."⁴ As for the Christian's creativity, C. S. Lewis says, "And always of every idea and of every method he will ask not 'Is it mine?' but 'Is it good.'" There has always been the temptation to worship the created instead of the Creator. C. S. Lewis observes, "The unbeliever is always apt to make a kind of religion of his aesthetic experiences."⁵ Hans R. Rookmaaker, head of the Art History Department at the Free University of Amsterdam in Holland, states, "Somewhere between the middle ages and our times art became Art."⁶ He continues, "All this quest for endowing art with some special meaning is in itself a sign of the crisis of art ... Art is said to be an expression of man's innermost being. But what if there is little inside?"⁷

H. Richard Niebuhr has rightly said, "So long as we pursue art for art's sake, so long art will be the enemy of morality and of truth."⁸ This was written long before the National Endowment of the Arts controversy over what is art and what is offensive pornography. Niebuhr explains, "Our inner conflicts seem due to the fact that we have many sources of value, and these cannot all be served."⁹ It is no wonder Rookmaaker concludes: "Precisely because art had to be Art, it lost its ties with reality."¹⁰

As Christian artist Scott Stearman says, "It seems to me that the world is in little need of another message of confusion or chaos."¹¹

The Christian artistic endeavor should reflect something of beauty rather than out of the chaotic abyss or void. Stearman goes on to voice

the role of the artist in society, among all the "sound and fury" of life, is to stand patiently aside with quiet confidence, waiting, knowing that when all the noise and activities subside, someone will need a moment to pause, to reflect, to remember, to be filled with wonder or touched with emotion.¹²

He concludes his testimony with these words, "My desire is that when someone looks at the work I have produced over my lifetime, they will see a sincere body of art that reflects the dignity of the human spirit, the glory of God in creation, and the wonder of life."¹³ It is no wonder that this artist's work is greatly endowed with exceptional talent.

Yet, even for the Christian artist, there is a struggle before one can say it is good. One of the most respected young contemporary wildlife artists, Rod Frederick, describes it as the missing piece to the puzzle when speaking of the creative process of approaching his work:

It's almost as if photographs and sketches and emotions are the individual pieces, and what's in your mind is the whole puzzle. What happens is you're trying to fill in the little missing pieces to eventually come up with the concept, but there's always a piece missing. So it always falls somewhat short of what I want to convey.¹⁴

Rod Frederick found this to be true from his secular perspective. He, if anyone, should be able to say, "It is good." Yet, because of the fall, I believe, creativity has its limits. It too must groan with the whole creation (Romans 8:22). There is always a missing piece, a struggle between the vision and the product. I have always felt this to be true of even my best work. But, it is a good struggle. As Scott Stearman puts it, "It seems the pieces with which I struggle the most are the ones I find the most satisfying."¹⁵

Then there is the ecstasy. Because it is an urge, a divine gift or endowment, there is deep fulfillment, gratification. As "one who sees" there is much beauty to behold in the heart, in Creation, in the eye, with the pen, on the paper, on the canvas, in the clay. It is beautiful, glorious. N. C. Wyeth wrote as a young man, "Life at times seems almost too good, too rich for my spiritual digestive apparatus ... were it not for my slight ability to vent my feelings through the medium of paint, I would burst."¹⁶ G. K. Chesterton "liken[s] God's perpetual fresh delight in creating to a child's unwearyed 'do it again'."¹⁷

From the depths of my thought while composing this article, an incessant small voice of the six-year-old size begged, "Come see my show!" There she stood in make-up and gown all glittery with excitement. I relented. She sang her original creation:

First I thought I could do nothing,
But now I know I am strong.
With Jesus' power down in my heart

I can sing, I can draw all life long!
It's simple, isn't it. Simple even for a child, a child of God. "Do it again," is our childlike thrill to the creative urge.

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¹All Scripture quotations are from the NASB.

²Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible, Two Essays* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), p. 34.

³C. S. Lewis, "Christianity and Literature," *Genesis, Journal of the Society of Christians in the Arts, Inc.*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Gordon College Press, 1975), p. 22.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Hans R. Rookmaaker, "Art Needs No Justification," *Genesis, Journal of the Society of Christians in the Arts, Inc.*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Gordon College Press, 1975), p. 4.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁸H. Richard Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture With Supplementary Essays* (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Row Publishers, 1970), p. 121.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Rookmaaker, p. 5.

¹¹Dave Anderson, "Art—Not a Pastime But a Priesthood, a Visit With Nazarene Sculptor Scott Stearman," *Herald of Holiness*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (February 1991), p. 47.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹⁴Marie Bongiovanni, "Rod Frederick: In Pursuit of the Elusive," *Wildlife Art News*, Vol. X, No. 1 (January/February 1991), p. 28.

¹⁵Anderson, p. 47.

¹⁶Stephen May, "N. C. Wyeth," *Southwest Art*, Vol. XX, No. 9 (February 1991), p. 98.

¹⁷Daniel Loizeaux, "The Imagination of God," *Genesis, Journal of the Society of Christians in the Arts, Inc.*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Gordon College Press, 1975), p. 74.

CHRISTIANITY: Salvation or Lifestyle?

Rebecca Groothuis and Douglas Groothuis

Blaise Pascal, seventeenth-century philosopher, scientist and Christian, aptly observed that "Truth is so obscure in these times, and falsehood so established, that, unless we love the truth, we cannot know it." Twentieth-century society is not the first to turn its back on the question, "What is true?" But our society seems to have gone a step further than this. Not only the question of truth is neglected, but the very concept of truth seems to have been abandoned. "Religion" has been reduced to a mere mood, a choice, or a lifestyle. Truth is no longer an issue.

How many times have we heard Christianity referred to as if it were just one option among many equally legitimate "religious preferences"? "Christianity may be true for you," people say, "but it isn't true for me." The "truth" of a belief has come to be verified solely by its emotional function; reasonable reflection on religious doctrine is considered irrelevant. Religious belief is not compelled because it pertains to actual, objective truth, but chosen because it is somehow useful. Faith is considered true only to the extent that it produces desirable results (such as a good self-image).

True to this modern emphasis, Jesus is often marketed as a means to self-fulfillment. In our world of "overchoice" (Toffler) and self-centered ideals, people are concerned to choose their lifestyle, not to find their salvation—to escape failure, not hell; to attain assurance of success, not of heaven.

But biblical Christianity stands in direct opposition to this maladjusted mindset. Throughout Scripture, God reveals himself as the one God who towers above all. "Besides me there is no God" (Isa. 44:6), he declares. God jealously guarded his people Israel and commanded their exclusive worship. Idolatry was not considered an acceptable "alternative lifestyle"; it often carried with it fatal consequences. Scripture repeatedly speaks of God as a rock (2 Sam. 22:32; Psa. 62:2)—an apt metaphor for the unchanging objective reality of his existence and the unavoidable implications of his word and rule for us. If we obey, that rock will be for us a shelter and protection; if we rebel, we will stumble over that rock and fall (1 Pet. 2:6-8).

There can be no getting around the God of the Bible (Psa. 139). He stubbornly exists as he is. "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, The world and those who dwell in it" (Psa. 24:1). We are his property, like it or not!

Jesus himself declared that he was the only way, truth, and life (John 14:6). Because of this, every area of life is under Christ's Lordship. Biblical Christianity is nothing less than a total world-view,

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an all-encompassing life purpose and perspective. The truth of Christianity has serious and far-reaching implications—not just in the individual Christian's personal, emotional experience, but in the society at large. Christ is bigger than our feelings.

But the truth claims of Christianity are nothing if not obnoxious and even outrageous to the modern mentality. After all, isn't tolerance and open-mindedness the name of the game today? "Live and let live"—no matter what life-style is chosen? It really is not the accepted thing for one "religious preference" to single itself out from many "religious preferences" and insist on restoring and restructuring every sphere of life according to its own standards. Nor is it acceptable for one lifestyle unequivocally to resist compromise with rival lifestyles. But this is Christianity writ large over the face of modern pluralism. A vigorously biblical Christianity must be both comprehensive and exclusive.

Christianity has not always been at loggerheads with western culture. Several hundred years ago Christianity was the culturally accepted world-view in the western world. But through the intellectual compromises of the Renaissance (14th to 16th centuries) and the Enlightenment (18th century), the philosophical seeds were planted for naturalism, a world-view which assumes that everything is only matter in motion and ultimately lacking purpose or meaning. Things may evolve, but for no real end. Naturalism—also variously called secular humanism and materialism—gradually displaced Christianity as the sanctioned world-view of society, shaping cultural institutions so that now in the 20th century textbooks assume it, professors teach it, newspapers print it, and television networks broadcast it. We do just fine without such totalitarian ideas as one God over all.

Because naturalism recognizes only the material world as real and ignores the spiritual, it consigns all religious "options" to the realm of helpful or harmful illusions. Naturalism is anti-supernatural, so it will not take seriously Christianity's claim to truths such as the existence of God and the soul, angels and demons, heaven and hell. From a naturalistic standpoint, religion is judged solely according to its social usefulness. Naturalism decrees that no supernatural religion can be true in the usual sense of truth—that of corresponding to objective reality. Rather, religious "truth" is redefined to designate various ways in which various people can gain a sense of inner, subjective satisfaction. Naturalism is purely secular; it therefore privatizes and trivializes the sacred.

Despite naturalism's dim view of religion, people persist in their attempts to reach transcendence, to escape the stifling confines of a material and ultimately meaningless universe. Humans hunger for things supernatural; but concerning such things naturalism offers nothing beyond skepticism. So the marketplace of religious ideas is a free-for-all, a potpourri of personal preferences, chosen on the basis of their pragmatic value in the private lives of those who "believe." Such is the status of the burgeoning New Age movement in our culture. It is a religious belief system which itself defies naturalism, but is accommodated by society's naturalistic norms as

just another religious option which "works" for some people but not all people. Religious pluralism (the diversity of religious options) in our culture is compatible with and is nourished by the overall framework of naturalistic assumptions.

Sociologist Peter Berger characterizes the modern situation "as a near-inconceivable expansion of the areas of human life open to choices." Things which once were accepted as cultural "givens"—sexual norms, vocational opportunities, religious beliefs, for example—have now become matters of personal choice. The fact that some of these traditional "givens" (such as those restricting vocational opportunity) deserve to be discarded while others (such as those restricting sexual behavior) ought to be retained serves only to compound the social confusion of overchoice.

The confusion is especially critical in the area of religious belief. Because, as Berger observes, individuals need a "plausibility structure" (social confirmation and consensus) to maintain their beliefs, people today are overwhelmed by ambivalence concerning religion. Modern society does not provide the necessary sociological support for Christianity, so for many people Christian beliefs are no longer considered plausible or compelling in any final sense; rather, they are optional. Life is a multiple choice test in which any religious answer is permitted and none is required.

Pluralism thus has both a legal and a psychological effect. A pluralistic society provides legally for the free exercise of any religion—provided, of course, that such free exercise does not transgress other civil laws. But the psychological effect of a pluralistic society with a plethora of religious options is to regard them all as optional, alternative lifestyles. When this happens, religious belief is no longer viewed as staking a claim on objective *reality*—that which is stubbornly there whether or not anyone believes it—but rather is viewed as a matter of *psychology*. Religion is privatized, relegated to the personal, church-going, devotional life of the believer; for that is the only place where religious belief is allowed to exist with any validity. When Christianity is squeezed into this narrow, irrelevant mold, it becomes something other than the vibrant, compelling faith of the Bible.

Society becomes secularized when the plausibility of the religious world-view is weakened and its applicability narrowed. Different areas of life are compartmentalized into the sacred (individual, personal life) and the secular (institutional, public life). Once religion is banished to the "sacred" sphere, it "cannot any longer fulfill the classical task of religion, that of constructing a common world within which all of social life receives ultimate meaning binding on everybody" (Berger). The more the "secular" is relegated to the secularists, the narrower becomes the scope and impact of the sacred. Christians who shun political issues, for example, may wake up one day to find that they cannot legally give their children a genuinely Christian education because of excessive state regulations. The secular stands at the door and knocks—or rips it off the hinges when necessary.

As the secular impinges on it, the sacred itself becomes secu-

larized. The church is worldly to the extent that it allows the world to dictate its cultural expression, whether this is reflected in an attempt to retreat from the world entirely (as in extreme fundamentalism) or to join up with the world (as in theological liberalism). Usually, in fact, the religious retreat of the conservative Christian from the secular world results only in the adoption of cultural values taken from the secular society of an earlier era. Many Christians, it seems, have lost the ability to apply biblical principles with integrity and transforming power to the whole of life and culture.

Religion becomes "subjectivized" in a society that is secularized. Because a naturalistic and pluralistic society provides no objective answers to the basic questions of life, moderns are obliged to look within to construct whatever certainties they can. But according to the Christian world view, truth is determined not by subjective preference but by objective reference to God's revelation in Scripture.

While Christian truth is not subjectively determined, it is subjectively received "by faith"—a faith based on fact, not fancy. As Christian philosopher Arthur Holmes put it, "I can passionately believe in a certain objective reality without violating either my intellectual integrity or the universality of truth."

Christianity is objectively true and subjectively compelling. We need not—indeed, we dare not—allow modernity to pare it down to such dimensions as are acceptable in a secular society. The claims of Christianity are exclusive, and their implications are comprehensive. To put the message of the Bible into one of the privatized "religion boxes" prepared by pluralism is to treat the Bible falsely. The Christ of true Christianity will not be so confined. He is Lord of all creation; there is no area of life exempt from his word and rule. We who are his are called to serve him as he is, and to resist the tendency to make him serve us as the self-help god our pluralized, secularized society would have him to be.

Christianity offers the world salvation on God's terms, not just another self-styled lifestyle.

IN CHRIST OR IN CRISIS?

Jean-Marc Berthoud

... The entire movement of modern civilization since the Renaissance is in the direction of a rupture of its ties to the created order, to the Creator, so that man himself might finally, on the grounds of a dislocated reality, recreate in his head and impose by violence upon all reality, a perfect new order.

In politics this was the clear design of Hobbes, of Rousseau and of Marx; in philosophy that of Descartes and of Kant; in biology that of Darwin and of Oparin; in theology that of Wellhausen, of Bultmann, of Barth and of Kung; in classical music that of Schoenberg and of Webern. In all areas we can recognize the slogan of the modern revolution: dissolve in order to construct everything anew: *dissolve ut coagitur*. Do not reform, reconstruct, reestablish in respect of reality, of true tradition, of Revelation, but as new human creator raze everything in order to build the new perfect City of Man. This is the pagan doctrine of *creative destruction*, the destruction of the Carnival, of Revolution, of the struggle of the species or of classes which allegedly bear within themselves the capacity to create all things. Such a new creation would take place in politics and arts, in nature and in society. It would be accomplished without God and without His law, without respect for His creation and for the past. It would be brought about through cutting ourselves off from the testimony of the senses and of human language, of the created forms, and especially without recourse to the true lights of divine Revelation. Is it then astonishing that the great modern design only ends in the densest intellectual night, in the most complete cacophony, in endless ugliness, in the destruction of the family, in social anarchy and in democratic or despotic totalitarianism, in short, in the chaos of evil and sin? Such a program of destructuring of the created order, often advanced under the pretext of opposing existing abuses, ends in its replacement by a new structure fabricated in all details by men who want to throw off as a hateful yoke the created order and its laws. This program is the very foundation of modern politics.

Often without realizing it modern political thought has adopted the atheist and anti-creational ideology of the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). Hobbes explicitly sought to overthrow the political and social covenant which God established from creation on with man. Here are the terms of this covenant: all power comes from God Who delegates it to certain men; from the beginning the created order is social because the family is the constituent foundation of human society; the limits of power (God's Law) are established by God and not by man, and these immutable laws are normative for the individual as well as for all life in society; society which is both individual and social is a reflection of the Trinity, One in Three Divine Persons. Man's exercise of power is

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inscribed in this general framework. Outside of it power becomes abuse and consequently inherently illegitimate.

Hobbes, whom we might consider the Darwin of political science, succeeded in tearing Western political thought loose from its true framework. For God's original act creating and ordering society Hobbes substituted a myth of origins, just as Darwin replaced the ordered and stable divine creation of the universe and of life by the mythological fiction of the evolution of all things. All dominant Western political thought has for a long time fallen into step with Hobbes, though in rather different ways. Here should be named such influential thinkers as Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Bentham, Austin, Marx, Lenin, Kelsen, etc. who have all worked in the sense of a politics torn away from the norms of God's Law, from the immutable order of created reality, from God.

For Hobbes there was in the beginning a state of mythical nature, a pure speculative hypothesis, constituted of free and equal men totally detached from each other and individually totally sovereign, themselves deciding their proper interest, their good and evil. These men could only interact in violent conflict and destroy each other. Hence, in order to protect themselves from such a murderous anarchy, the Hobbesian myth postulates that by a fictitious social contract they all at the same moment renounced their sovereignty in order to delegate it to one single man among them. Thus this one became the only sovereign in whom rested the exclusive right of legislation and who was not subject to any exterior norm or control.

This sovereign, monarchical in the thought of Hobbes, became parliamentary in the thought of Locke and popular in the system of Rousseau, of the French Revolution and of the democracies justly called "popular." For the word "people" in the jargon of Rousseau and of the French Revolution, taken up by the communists, does not mean the total number of citizens but rather the place in society where sovereignty is in effect located: the Committee of Public Safety, the Jacobin Club, the Party, etc. These secondary political mutations in no way changed the very foundations of the anti-God system, independent of the divine order and without any tie whatever with the order of reality, invented by Hobbes. Thus was instituted the modern concept of the State as entirely independent of all created order and of any and all law placed above it. We now live under and in this State, and it is this concept of the absolute State which explains the limitless character of modern legislation in the East as well as in the West. Hobbes still maintained over against this State-Leviathan a private domain of inalienable human rights, but their content was also severed from any and all notion of a permanent social order or from any reference to a Divine Law beyond man.

This system, today universally adopted, explains by itself why the countless solutions proposed by our legislators, parliamentary or despotic, only aggravate the crisis in which we find ourselves, because all these solutions are entirely arbitrary in principle (once in a while common sense and the respect for God's Law prevail for

an instant over ideology), for they are neither ordered by a sound concept of the created order of social and political reality, nor are they limited by the norms of usage established by the Maker of society, God. Thus we see that our two democracies, "popular" and "liberal," beneath their apparent differences and in spite of the greater benefits granted to individuals in one of them, are equally, when all is said and done, of a totalitarian nature. For in rejecting God as social and political finality they take themselves as their own finality, they make themselves their own gods. Thus the political system independent of God and of reality itself guarantees the permanence of the spiral of crises in which we live. For it rejects the sovereignty of our true and only King, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We could go on listing and analyzing the crises of the modern world indefinitely, for a world without God, without submission to God's Law and without respect of reality is like a physical organism weakened by its own malfunctioning. It is invaded by hostile agents which insure the permanence of its state of crisis. The disturbance of minds has become so great that these hostile agents are even proposed as remedies. In his latest work, *Useless Knowledge* (Grasset, Paris, 1988) Jean-Francois Revel confirmed this statement when he showed to which point our society is refusing true information, which has become useless for it because in the absence of stable criteria and of a sense of reality true information cannot be distinguished from false information. God tells us today as He did in the time of the prophet Isaiah: "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed" (Isaiah 6:9-10).

Can we then be amazed that such a world is so blind about those who really rule it? That it falls so gladly in fatuous admiration at the feet of the first clever, subtle, false, courteous, and unscrupulous conjurer come from the East? "God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie" (II Thessalonians 2:11).

The world-wide crisis of sense and society, of ecology and life, of information and politics is manifestly sent by God Himself to a mankind in revolt against its good Creator, against the gracious Savior. Such a crisis is intended for the temporal and eternal judgment of some, and the repentance of those who are destined for life, here below as well as in eternity. The proclamation of Truth, Law and Grace, Judgment and Mercy, can only harden the heart and the thoughts of those who obstinately reject the grace God is offering them. But for others, this hard judgment upon our vain works leads us to separate ourselves from our personal sins as well as those of our civilization, and to turn toward the Lord Jesus Christ, Savior and King. ...

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CONFLICT VERSUS HARMONY

Rousas John Rushdoony

Man since Darwin has viewed life as conflict because of a radical and essential conflict of interests. Capital and labor are seen as necessary enemies; farm and city are held to have opposing interests; the generations are supposedly necessarily at war with each other; adolescence is seen as by nature a time of rebellion; races and nationalities are assumed to be natural enemies, and so on and on. Racism, a modern phenomenon, is a product of scientific theory, specifically of Darwinism. We have not mentioned another area of assumed conflict, the sexes; the "war of the sexes" is seen as inescapable. The logic of Darwinism is a conflict society; struggle to gain the advantage over others, do in others before they do you in, it's a dog-eat-dog world, and survival is the chief if not the only virtue. There can be no peace in a Darwinian culture, only perpetual warfare between various groups. The rhetoric of minority and majority groups today is the rhetoric of conflict. As a result, the more we "war for peace" in any area of life and thought, the deeper the conflict becomes.

As Henry Van Til pointed out some years ago, culture is religion externalized. The culture of a conflict society sees only a deepening of its premise that conflict is basic to life and progress. The *Dictionary of Sociology* states in part: "Conflict arises out of the principle of limitation inherent in a finite universe. The wishes and interests of sentient beings run counter to each other, and the quality of egoism impels each party to seek to eliminate the other to the extent necessary for the satisfaction of his own desires. By analogy, the term may be extended to include the struggle with inanimate or subhuman objects (cf. struggle for existence), but in its sociological meaning all the parties involved must be human." (Charles J. Bushnell, "conflict," in Henry Pratt Fairchild, editor: *Dictionary of Sociology*, p. 59. New York, N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1944.) The premises of this definition are, *first*, "the principle of limitation inherent in a finite universe." Now Christians believe in a finite universe even more than evolutionists, but they do *not* see finitude as requiring conflict. Because of God's providence, there is no necessary conflict. Humanism, however, from Plato to the present, has insisted that the world is over-populated. If other people are necessarily at war with you for the available resources, then conflict is necessary. If, however, the all-wise God has provided resources for all if men will work to develop them, harmony is then the key.

Second, this definition sees that a "necessary" conflict of interests "impels each party to seek to eliminate the other." This gives us a world of total warfare, whereas in the Biblical view all peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations must be converted, made members of

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Jesus Christ, and brought into communion and community one with another. This is why creationism is so essential to world peace; evolution presupposes a cosmic mindlessness and perpetual conflict.

Third, this conflict is not only with other peoples, and hence racism, but also with inanimate objects, and hence the humanistic presupposition that man is at war with his environment. There is a necessary link in the minds of non-Christian environmentalists between population control and abortion on the one hand, and a pagan view of the environment on the other. The belief in the conflict of interests pits man against man, and man against things. Instead of an essential and metaphysical harmony of interests, this false faith insists on an essential conflict of interests.

There is a reason for this. If the God of Scripture is recognized as the Creator and Governor of all things, then all of creation has a common origin, a common meaning, and a common purpose and goal. If God be denied, then there exists only a total warfare, a total struggle for survival and domination. The result is a chaos of conflict. . . .

There is no small dismay in the media over the rise of Islam and its growing militancy. This, however, should be no surprise to us. As Christians, we should recognize the reason for this. St. Paul set forth the basic premise of his position thus: "he is a Jew (i.e., a covenant man) which is one inwardly" (Rom. 2:29). As against this, Mohammed declared, "He is a Muslim who is one outwardly," and the "five pillars of Islam" are all aspects of externalism (regular repetition of the creed, repetition of prescribed prayers five times daily, almsgiving, observance of the Feast of Ramadan, and pilgrimage to Mecca). Modern science has also reduced man to externalism, to an animal status. The externalism of Islam has been vindicated and the Biblical stress on the governance of the Holy Spirit discredited by such a view of science.

In a mindless world, the fortuitous concourse of atoms means conflict, and progress through conflict, through the clash of varying forces. The premise of Hegel that life is a perpetual conflict, leading to a resolution, leading to a new conflict, is not only the Marxist premise but that of all non-Christian modern thought and action. This leads to cultural polarization and enmity. Peace attempts became at the same time war strategies. Nations seek to establish cooperating trading blocs in order to war against other traders as well as against dissenters in their own midst. The goal is peace through coercion, peace through some kind of warfare. The result is "perpetual war for perpetual peace."

In analyzing the idea of the *conflict of interests*, we have been dealing with one of the two basic concepts of our time. The other has its roots in modern philosophy, beginning with Descartes and culminating in Kant and Hegel, namely, the intellectual destruction of an objective world order and the substitution of man's autonomous mind in its place. Hegel summed this up in the belief that *the rational is the real*. The loss of reality in our time has its origins in this insane idea. What the intellectual elite sees as rational is hence

reality! Our modern planning is in terms of the ostensible reality of what the planners declare is rational. . . .

Pluralism apart from Christ leads only to conflict, whereas pluralism in Christ means that our essential government comes, not from self-interest and an ugly survival of the fittest warfare, but from the peace of God through Christ's atonement, God's law-word, and the governance of the Holy Spirit. Freedom in a secular society is another name for unending conflict. Freedom in Christ means that we are governed, not by self-interest, but by the grace, law, and Spirit of the Living God.

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THE INFLUENCE OF EVOLUTION ON SCIENCE FICTION

Jerry Bergman

The beginning of science fiction is generally attributed to the nineteenth century work of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells. According to *The Encyclopedia Britannica* (1975, Vol. VIII, 984) science fiction encompasses literary works in which modern technology and scientific discovery are crucial to the story line:

Depending upon the author's purpose, the degree to which the science element is fictionalized may range from a careful and informed extrapolation from known facts and principles to the most far fetched and flatly contradictory of speculations. What remains constant throughout the imaginative spectrum is the appearance of plausibility, stemming from an at least surface allegiance to the attitudes, methods, and terminology of science.

Much of this literary genre was at first called scientific romances or science novels. Science fiction proper as a separate classification of literature dates back to only about 1926 when Hugo Gernsback founded *Amazing Stories Magazine* to specialize in literature that he called "scientification." Gernsback's successful venture was soon widely imitated. Science fiction has covered many, if not most, scientific innovations long before they were on the drawing boards. Not unexpectedly, surveys have shown that many practicing scientists themselves enjoy science fiction literature, often more than any other type.

Probably in no literary form has evolutionary theory had such a profound influence as on science fiction (Jaki 1988): This is largely because evolution theory has had a tremendous influence on the sciences, and most science fiction is a product of scientists, or at least individuals interested in science. A review of the history of various beliefs finds our belief structure highly influences our explanation and conclusions concerning ambiguous stimuli. When it was accepted by most Westerners that humans and all life were the direct creations of God, it was believed that if other worlds existed and had life, they were also created by God and were part of his plan. This world view worked against beliefs in intelligent beings from other planets that evolved separately or apart from God.

Acceptance of evolution indicated that if life evolved on Earth, it could likewise have evolved elsewhere. This life could currently be either at a "lower" or a "higher" level than humankind, or it may even be of an entirely different kind of life, such as one that is not carbon molecule based. If many kinds and types of life exist elsewhere in the universe, much science fiction becomes a real

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possibility. Exobiologists such as Carl Sagan and others now postulate that it is highly probable that life exists in many far off places in the universe (Sagan 1980).

H. G. Wells' (Herbert George) was modern England's most prolific author. His works were best sellers for years, and are still sold in many editions (the current *Books in Print* lists scores of his works still in print in the United States). His orientation toward evolution is indicated by the fact that he studied science under Thomas Henry Huxley, the scientist who is today called Darwin's bulldog, and was one of history's most staunch defenders and apologists for evolution. Wells' science degree prepared him for a life of teaching, research and writing. After graduation, he began not only teaching, but working on a biology textbook. He soon contracted tuberculosis which prevented him from being a teacher, but he could still write, and continued full time in this area.

In 1891, Wells published several essays in *Fortnightly Review*. His first full length science fiction book was *The Time Machine*, published in 1895. Wells openly stated that his work was written to influence people's views in various areas, one of which was evolution (Magill 1958, 1137). In many of his works, evolution and the implications of the theory for society are major themes.

Another excellent example of the influence of evolution on literature is *Frankenstein*. Written by Mary Godwin Shelley, and first published in 1817, her theme is the application of science to life and what can go wrong. Although often not regarded as science fiction, this work is the best extant candidate for the honor of the first true science fiction story. Even the word *Frankenstein* has become a noun in our vocabulary today, understood by virtually all.

It was not until the Renaissance in the fifteenth century that we began to seriously comprehend the concept of a solar system family of planets. One of the first researchers to scientifically defend a system with a sun at the center and the then known planets traveling around it in circular orbits was Nicholas Copernicus. With the publishing of his *On the Revolution of Heavenly Bodies* in 1543, the universe as we know it first began to be understood. Men such as Galileo, Kepler and others, though they did not agree with Copernicus in some areas, expanded the heliocentric view. This view was not totally new, and actually was postulated centuries previously by Eratosthenes, Aristarchus and others, but most people, even most learned men, did not accept the heliocentric view of the universe until in the early 1600s (Sagan and Leonard 1972).

The concept of a heliocentric solar system carried with it the realization that the Earth was a globe which was far larger than previously thought. Although, since at least Plato's time, a few thinkers had correctly addressed the shape and even the approximate size of the Earth (Eratosthenes' estimate was close), most of the ancients entertained a view of the universe vastly different from our modern day picture. After these discoveries, it was reasoned that the solar system must be considerably larger than the ancients had assumed. In only Copernicus' day was it generally realized

that the planets were not just a few miles away from the Earth's ground surface as historically assumed. Its size was not fully comprehended until the early 1900s when Pluto was discovered. Researchers in the 1700s also discerned that the other planets were in some ways much like the Earth, another revolutionary idea. As Reichen (1963, 53) stated:

In a century and a half, from Copernicus to Newton, man's image of the universe had been totally transformed. It was a far larger universe, far more complex, and far more remote from the Earth.

Along with the modern realization that there were other "worlds" far away from the Earth came the possibility that living beings may exist on these planets. This in itself did not influence a belief in the view of strange other worlds which is a common topic of science fiction for one important reason: until the turn of the century, it was almost universally believed that God had directly created humans and all life. Hence, if life existed on other planets, God must have created it. Thus, the life there must be similar to that on Earth. Because God was believed to have been a loving heavenly Father, it was incomprehensible that He would create physical creatures on other planets which were grotesque, cruel, or naturally malicious towards the Earth as commonly represented in much early science fiction.

The increasing acceptance of the evolutionary theory in the middle of the 1800s spurred on by such workers as Darwin, Huxley, Haeckel and others, brought the belief that just as life on the Earth evolved on its own, life could also have developed on other planets, only in different ways, depending on the surrounding environmental conditions. Humans and animals were no longer seen as the product of an intelligent designer with a loving purpose, but as a result of natural law, chance and the brutal forces of competition which occurred in the impersonal natural world. As Buskirk (1979, 2) stated:

...most who believe in life in outer space suppose it on the theory of evolution. An evolutionist would reason: If life evolved after millions of years on this planet, why couldn't it have done so elsewhere in the universe?

Much science fiction had meaning only when it was believed that both other large Earth-like planets and other solar systems existed. Except for God, angels, devils or other beings which were spiritual, and therefore did not need to travel in material machines, few persons assumed beings from other planets could exist. As Sagan and Leonard (1972, 19) state, the world, as people who lived at the dawn of history saw it or understood it, "was a small patch of land bounded by distant hills and perhaps by the blue line of the sea." Of course, it is difficult to discern exactly how most ancients perceived the universe. The common people, as well as many scholars, usually viewed the universe as nothing more than what it appeared to be from Earth: the planets were merely stars that moved faster, and the stars were assumed to be fairly small objects which hung in the sky not too far away from the Earth. The enor-

mous size of the Universe was not fully understood until this century.

Literature, especially science fiction, served to give the common person this new view of the cosmos and life (see for example Verne, 1878). One of the first popular works about life from other planets was H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* (1895) which told of the story of grotesque monsters with tremendous powers that came to Earth from Mars. The belief that beings inhabited other planets became accepted to the extent that a 1938 fictional radio dramatization of *War of the Worlds* by Orson Wells was mistakenly understood by many listeners as a genuine news report! The result of this broadcast was that, as one newspaper stated, America "was convulsed by panic and hysteria." Many people believed that the broadcast was real—so much so that hundreds of doctors and nurses called their local hospitals to volunteer their services. Men in the armed forces offered their help, and city officials began to work out mass evacuation plans (Cantril 1966). Some people actually poisoned themselves, preferring to die by their own hands rather than from the ray guns of Martians (Cantril 1966). This incident conveys the fact that many people then had a strong belief in the possibility of intelligent life on other worlds—and that it could be malicious, and in some way very harmful to the people on the Earth. Later, a number of other stories about space travel became popular. Many featured odd, often malicious creatures from other planets, such as those in the Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon books and later in their television series.

A review of prominent science fiction writers today, including especially Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury, finds that in their writings, they make many very definite statements relative to their religious beliefs. They are unequivocally opposed to the creationist's viewpoint and have extensively expressed their opposition to this world view. They are extremely supportive of an atheistic, or at least the non-theistic world view, and essentially espouse the views of evolution as proposed by Charles Darwin and others. This viewpoint includes both an open hostility towards the Judeo-Christian world view and a strong support of the evolutionary worldview.

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BOOK REVIEW

K. L. Billingsley, *The Seductive Image: A Christian Critique of the World of Film.*

Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989.

Softcover, 236 pp. Incl. Notes, Movie Index and Index.

Lloyd Billingsley has written scripts for stage, film and TV. He is hence familiar with the inside workings of Hollywood, center of movie production for America and much of the world. As he describes them, the immensely influential denizens of Hollywood are deeply isolated from the American mainstream. Most are anti-American, reject traditional religion and morality, and politically far left. They ensure the monetary profit of their products by movies which are for the most part "kiss-kiss, bang-bang," catering to the appetites of

adolescent America, which has been subjected to the brain-reduction surgery and social indoctrination of public education. MTV ("Music" television) has succeeded in reducing the adolescent attention span to that of a hummingbird. Accordingly, studios dumb down the product, so the kids can understand it.

But to be fair to the Leaders of Tomorrow, adult audiences also leave much to be desired. ...

Given the foibles of the system, it is a wonder that any decent films get made at all. In short, the commercial films viewed by countless millions worldwide reflect the hard realities of a highly competitive, inefficient, and wasteful business, which is run by a decidedly insulated and cliquish elite. (pp. 113, 114)

Billingsley rejects the view of Christians who would shun movies and theater altogether. He compares movies to drama and refers to dramatic situations in the Bible, in Baptism and Communion, church services, Jesus' parables, and church dogma. While some in the Church, like St. Augustine, opposed drama, others, like the authors of the mystery plays of the Middle Ages, did not. With Francis Schaeffer, H. R. Rookmaaker and other renowned contemporary Christian teachers Billingsley believes that "art needs no justification, that the capacity for art is one important area of distinction between human beings and animals" and that human beings need entertainment such as Christmas pageants or sports (p.42).

Chapters Five and Six, an overview of what film does and does not do well, are probably the best part of the book. Film cannot well portray spiritual experience, such as prayer, for no dramatic outward action is involved. It therefore does not show what happens *after* a sinner becomes a Christian; his gradual moral restora-

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tion is not dramatic enough. Film is not good at showing artistic experience either: "Moving pictures are supposed to *move*, and the screen cries out for *action*. A writer crashing away at a typewriter just doesn't make it. ... The creative process is, like religious experience, internal and rather mysterious. This is one point on which prose literature is superior to film" (p.58). Since film is a world of fantasy, of make-believe, good characters often come off as phony, naive and boring while the villains steal the show. Billingsley is correct in thinking that "good" characters "have been black-listed from films since the 1960s. It was about this time that the cult of the antihero began" (p.64). Of course there are exceptions ("Goodbye Mr. Chips," "Tender Mercies") but these are few. Because film cannot effectively portray goodness, religious experience, the creative process, and intellectual life, "it is a severely limited medium indeed" (p.65). What film does well is conveying a sense of place, switching from the general to the specific, action, switches in time; dreams and fantasies, crime, war, and horror.

Billingsley praises documentary films as "the most authentic medium, provided the material comes in context, without editorial cuts" (p.68). This is a crucial reservation indeed, and it is usually disobeyed. Malcolm Muggeridge, for many years involved in documentary film making as a top newsman, writes in his important book *Christ and the Media* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, and Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977) that documentaries are usually grossly inaccurate and by no means trustworthy records of what really happened. "As for the words that accompany the pictures," he writes,

they have, of course, to be edited down and made to fit, and so are as malleable as the footage, if not more so. There are many authenticated cases of word-faking, like picture-faking. In the case, for instance, of the award-winning television programme *The Selling of the Pentagon*, some of the interviews have been shown to be edited in a way that gives a completely false impression of what was actually said. It goes without saying that none of the awards were withdrawn when the faking was exposed. ... The faking possibilities especially in the cutting room are well-nigh illimitable. (pp. 64-65)

According to Billingsley film excels at amusement, a word which is seldom analyzed. To "muse" is to think or ponder. The prefix *a* changes the meaning entirely, as in "theist" and "atheist." "To be amused," Billingsley points out, "is therefore not to think, or to be prevented from thinking. This is what film does best in a host of ways. ... This seems to be what audiences want, to forget their troubles; and in most cases, who can blame them?" (pp. 69-70)

The problem with this statement is that to forget one's troubles for a while does not solve them nor teach fortitude in bearing them. Moreover, the momentary reprieve from facing one's problems through film is not harmless in itself. It may become an addiction to adults as well as children who now spend more time glued to the TV

screen than anywhere else. Viewers may literally lose themselves in the film world of fantasy. When that fantasy consists as it now usually does of sex, violence, anarchy and increasingly occultism, normal life, that is, a life lived according to norms of right conduct, seems more and more dull and unappealing. What we need to have momentary respite from our troubles is not so much passive "entertainment" but active *recreation*: gardening, an art or craft such as woodworking, needlework, music, singing, painting, or joyful interaction with other people such as a picnic or game of volleyball with family or friends are examples. This writer would not go as far as Malcolm Muggeridge who completely excludes television and film from his life; after all, numerous older and a few contemporary films are worth seeing and hence truly recreational. But discretion is essential in our time where, as Muggeridge so rightly states, there is

an ever-widening chasm between the fantasy in terms of which the media induce us to live, and the reality of our existence as made in the image of God, as sojourners in time whose true habitat is eternity. The fantasy is all-encompassing; awareness of reality requires the seeing eye which comes to those born again in Christ. It is like coming to after an anaesthetic; the mists lift, consciousness returns, everything in the world is more beautiful than ever it was ... every thought clearer, love deeper, joy more abounding, hope more certain. Who could hesitate, confronted with this choice between an old fantasy and a newly discovered reality? (*Christ and the Media*, p.30)

Absorption in a fantasy world is not the only danger inherent in film. The growing illiteracy in America (and perhaps other Western countries flooded with film and television) may well be due not only to the sheer time spent before the screen rather than in reading and studying, but especially to film's communicating essentially by pictures, not words. True, public schools, where most children still receive what passes for "education," have grossly deteriorated, but the very medium of film largely eliminates *written and spoken language*, without which analytical communication and problem solving is impossible. One now meets more and more TV-addicted children who cannot talk intelligibly about anything because they do not know the names of objects; their minds are filled exclusively with pictures unconnected with words. Public education will no doubt be watered down yet more in "response." Parents who abdicate their child-rearing to TV won't really care. Parents who do care already have restricted or completely banned TV in their homes, and their children are in private, Christian or home schools where true learning (that is, preparation for analytical communication and problem solving) involving written and spoken language is still possible. Without mastery of language history, literature, all great human tradition and last but not most essential, God's Word itself in Scripture becomes inaccessible. Billingsley concludes his book with much the same sad reflection:

Just as in Orwell's *1984*, in which the language Newspeak narrowed the range of thought by eliminating words, the language of cinema narrows our imagination by substituting its images and memory for our own. Perhaps that is why Christians have historically been people of the word more than people of the image (p.205).

Billingsley would like to see more Christians become involved in making films themselves rather than merely condemn "the whole realm of popular culture" in a "false pietism" which "is a vicious circle indeed." He cites the example of a Christian billionaire refusing to finance a movie with conservative political themes, and of Campus Crusade for Christ which offered to pay \$10 million to purchase and destroy all copies of *The Last Temptation of Christ* (p.194). He believes it would be much better to make some low-budget Christian films for this sum, thus lighting a candle rather than cursing the darkness. Christian films should be technically and artistically competent and have realistic goals in keeping with what film does best. This is good advice which also takes into account the God-given creative abilities of Christians in the performing arts. Interestingly enough, the wonderful movie *Chariots of Fire*, which was acclaimed by the Christian public all over the world and earned a Best Picture award in 1982, was "neither made nor financed by outgoing Christians. Screenwriter Colin Welland is by all indications an agnostic, and the money for *Chariots* was largely supplied by Dodi Fayed, an Egyptian shipping magnate and a Muslim" (p.188).

On the whole, this is an interesting book with instructive details about how the film industry operates and what "works" in film. It is, however, too enthusiastic about the truth value of film documentaries, and too easygoing about the existing and potential harm of the medium of film per se. Malcolm Muggeridge is more discerning in these crucial points. Recommended with reservations as stated.

— Reviewed by Ellen Myers

IT'S THE WRONG TIME FOR GREAT ARTISTS

Doug Clark

The woman at the National Endowment for the Arts studied the young man who entered her office.

"Now this one really looks like a struggling artist," she thought.

He was short and wiry, with rough hands and a dark, stringy beard. He wore workman's clothes.

The woman asked, "How may I help you, Mr. ... ?"

"Michelangelo" he said in an Italian accent.

"Very well, Mr. Angelo. Now what can the NEA do for you?"

"I'd like to apply for a grant," he said. "You see, I am a sculptor, and the price of marble has gotten so high."

"Marble! You work in marble?"

"Of course. Is that unusual?"

"Well, yes," the NEA woman said. "I mean, most of the sculptors we find use tin cans, old commodes, even junked cars."

"Uh, very creative," said Michelangelo. "But I prefer marble. It is so pure and beautiful."

"Yes," said the woman. "Well, tell me, what kind of works do you plan to produce if you receive a grant from the NEA."

"Ah, there are many," the artist replied. "I want to do a Pieta, depicting the ultimate grief of mankind for the death of Christ. And also a David, a figure reflecting the inner strength of those favored by God. And a Moses, in anger at the wickedness of his people who have turned from the Lord. And then ..."

"Just a moment, Mr. Angelo," the woman interrupted. "I detect that all your works have some religious theme."

"No, not all," Michelangelo answered. "But most do, yes. It's very important to me. Besides, where I come from, most great art—painting, music, architecture, and so on—has been created for the glory of God."

"That may be," the NEA woman said. "But when it comes to federal funds, we have to follow certain guidelines. For example, if your work were intended to convey religious messages, then it might violate the establishment clause of the First Amendment, and we couldn't provide any money for it."

"You mean you don't award grants for anything with any religious theme at all?"

"Sometimes we do, if it's appropriate," she explained. "For example, we gave \$15,000 for an exhibition that included a picture of a crucifix submerged in a jar of urine. It was called 'Pliss Christ.' But that wasn't really religious. You see, by degrading Christianity, the artist offered a symbolic protest of the degradation of Christianity."

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"Brilliant. But didn't that offend Christians?"

"Of course," she said. "But that doesn't matter. You see, we can't deny funding to artists just because their works might offend somebody. That would be censorship, which is against the First Amendment."

"But you can't fund my sculptures because they glorify God?"

"I told you, that would violate the First Amendment," the NEA woman said. "Honestly, Mr. Angelo, I don't know why you can't see the distinction. Now, don't you do anything else?"

"Yes," the artist said. "I also paint."

"Good," she said. "Are you a cubist, surrealist or abstractionist?"

"No," he said, looking puzzled. "I like to paint the classical human form."

The NEA woman perked up. "You mean nudes?"

"Yes, some nudes," Michelangelo said.

"Anything homoerotic? We think that's very artistic," she allowed. "In fact, we gave \$25,000 for an exhibit by a photographer who produced some very daring work."

"No," Michelangelo flushed. "Not homoerotic. Biblical. I have been asked to paint scenes from the Bible on the ceiling of a chapel."

The woman seemed disappointed. "I'm sorry, Mr. Angelo," she said. "I don't think you'll have a very good chance of winning a grant from us. And if you don't mind some advice, I think you should pull yourself out of this thematic rut you're in. If you want to be an artist nowadays, you have to use your imagination. Be creative. Challenge people. Make them angry. You can't just copy ideas out of the Bible and expect to get anywhere."

"I guess not," Michelangelo said sadly. "Maybe this is just the wrong era for artists like me."

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